

121/131
COS 121 Bible I: Introduction
COS 131 Introduction to the Bible
Fall 2026
August 28-29 and September 25-26, 2026
All classes will be held online via Zoom

Instructor: Chris Haynes
chris.haynes@twkumc.org
931-239-6930

COS 121 Course Description:

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

Course Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
2. Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.
3. Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

COS 131 Course Description

This course introduces the role of Scripture in the life of the Church and the pastor's responsibility to interpret biblical texts faithfully and contextually. Students will explore interpretive tools—such as exegesis—to recognize the distinctions between biblical epochs and today's cultural context.

Course Objectives:

1. Articulate the role of Scripture in the life of the congregation, demonstrating the pastor's responsibility to interpret biblical texts faithfully and to connect them meaningfully to contemporary realities in ways that are both theologically sound and contextually responsible.
2. Develop a method of exegesis that is consistent with the nature and authority of Scripture.
3. Understand the inspiration and formation of the biblical canon, its authority within the community of faith, and the ways ancient and modern contexts shape interpretation for individuals and communities.
4. Apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to the diverse genres of biblical literature.

Required Textbooks:

Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*

John Hayes and Carl Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*

Bernard Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*

Required Reference Books:

The Interpreters One-Volume Commentary

HarperCollins Bible Dictionary

New Interpreter's Study Bible—NRSV

Videos:

Each unit in this syllabus asks students to watch a video related to the material covered in that unit (most of these videos are 45-50 minutes in length). These videos can be accessed through *Vimeo* at the links below—

Video #1—"The Bible as History, Literature, & Guide to Faith"

<http://vimeo.com/442074706>

Video #2—"The Torah"

<http://vimeo.com/444707827>

Video #3—"The Hebrew Prophets"

<http://vimeo.com/447908201>

Video #4—"The New Testament Gospels"

<http://vimeo.com/448704588>

Video #5—"The New Testament Letters"

<http://vimeo.com/451241259>

Grading:

Each student will be awarded a grade for COS121 according to the number of points accumulated for the class—

A	90-100 points
B	80-89 points
C	70-79 points
D	60-69 points
F	below 60 points

The various assignments discussed later in this syllabus will be assigned the following point values—

Unit I:	Study Questions	10 points
	1 st Weekend Attendance (Zoom)	5 points
Unit II:	Study Questions	10 points
	Genesis Paper	10 points
Unit III:	Study Questions	10 points
	Amos/Hosea Paper	10 points
Unit IV:	Study Questions	10 points
	Mark Paper	10 points
Unit V:	Study Questions	10 points
	Philippians Paper	10 points
	2 nd Weekend Attendance (Zoom)	5 points
	TOTAL	100 points

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Unit I.

1. Read Fee & Stuart pp. 21-35.
2. Read Hayes & Holladay pp. 5-16, 53-61, 90-100.
3. Read Anderson pp. 9-15.
4. Read HarperCollins Bible Dictionary pp. 118-120.
5. Watch **Video #1—The Bible as History, Literature, and Guide for Faith**.
6. Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—
 - a. What is the difference between exegesis and hermeneutics?
 - b. What factors affect the exegetical process? (see especially the Hayes/Holladay book).
 - c. Drawing from the assigned readings, how do you understand the terms “historical context” and “literary context”?
 - d. Briefly describe the “three acts” in the historical drama, according to the Anderson book.
 - e. How do you understand the term “canon” and its development in the early church? (see especially the HarperCollins reading).
 - f. Describe one insight from these readings that encouraged and illumined your approach to the Bible. Then discuss one idea that challenged you and made you uncomfortable.
7. Participate in class discussions with other students via Zoom (Friday evening and Saturday morning of the first weekend of the class).

Please note: The work for Units I and II is considered “pre-course” work in that it should be completed and submitted before the first weekend of the class August 28-29. This work should be emailed to the instructor by midnight on Tuesday, August 25.

Unit II.

1. Read Fee & Stuart pp. 93-103, 168-175.
2. Read Anderson pp. 18-36.
3. Watch **Video #2—The Torah**.
4. Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—
 - a. What are the three levels of narrative in the OT as set forth by Fee/Stuart?
 - b. What guidelines shape the Christian community’s relationship to OT law, according to Fee/Stuart?
 - c. The Anderson book sees the Genesis 3 narrative in the Garden of Eden as falling into three episodes; briefly discuss each.
 - d. Anderson highlights critical points related to God’s covenant with Israel on pp. 34-35; summarize these ideas in your own words.
5. Read Genesis 1:1-2:25. Write a 2-3 page paper discussing these ancient creation narratives. You will need to draw upon *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary*, the *HarperCollins Dictionary*, other books for this class, or other sources available to you. Your paper might

consider some of the following questions—why do we often see two creation stories here? how are these two stories similar or different? what literary issues are noteworthy? what ancient cultural understandings are evident in these stories? what are the major theological affirmations here? Be sure to write with proper grammar and citation of any sources you utilize.

Please note: Unit II assignments (along with Unit I assignments) are included in the “pre-course work” that is due Tuesday, August 25.

Unit III.

1. Read Fee & Stuart pp. 187-211.
2. Read Anderson pp. 39-63.
3. Watch **Video #3—The Hebrew Prophets**.
4. Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—
 - a. What were the major functions of the Hebrew prophets, according to Fee/Stuart?
 - b. What do Fee/Stuart mean by “historical context” related to these prophets? Discuss.
 - c. Fee/Stuart warn students of the OT against seeing the prophets as foretellers of the future. Explain their concern. Do you agree/disagree?
 - d. Most Hebrew prophets spoke between the 8th century BCE and the 5th century BCE. In the assigned pages from Anderson, what does the author see as the major political events shaping prophecy during this period?
5. Suppose you are teaching a Bible Study on the early prophets Amos and Hosea. Using *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary*, the *HarperCollins Dictionary*, other books from this class, or other resources available to you, develop the introductory session for this study. You will need to consider the historical context, literary issues, similarities and differences between the messages of these prophets, etc. You might also consider what is known about each prophet personally, what each says about God and about humanity, how each sees the covenant with God. You may organize your material in outline form or in any manner that would effectively communicate with your Bible Study group. Be sure to tell where you found your material (i.e. cite sources).

Please note: The work for Unit III is considered “mid-course work” and should be completed and emailed to the instructor by Tuesday, September 22; some of this material will likely be discussed in the first weekend Zoom sessions while a part of this material will be covered in the final weekend Zoom gatherings.

Unit IV.

1. Read Fee & Stuart pp. 132-167.
2. Read Hayes & Holladay pp. 104-114.
3. Read Anderson pp. 66-73.
4. Watch **Video #4—New Testament Gospels**.
5. Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—

- a. Why do Fee/Stuart stress the importance of investigating both the historical setting of Jesus and the historical setting of the gospel writer when studying the gospels?
 - b. Beginning on page 146, Fee/Stuart assert that each gospel writer employed selectivity, arrangement, and adaptation in composing the gospels; discuss and explain each of these terms.
 - c. What do Hayes/Holladay mean by the term “literary form”? How does the German phrase *sitz im leben* relate to literary genres?
 - d. Anderson speaks of the Christ Event as the “denouement of the historical drama” (p.68). What does this mean? Do you agree with Anderson? What evidence of this do we see in the church and in society?
6. Prepare an exegesis paper (2-3 pages in length) focusing on Mark 9:2-8. Utilize the *Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary*, the *HarperCollins Dictionary*, other books for this class, or other resources available to you. Look at the historical context, literary context, parallel texts in the other gospels, etc. What does the passage say about Jesus, about God’s kingdom, about humanity, about the church?

Please note: The assignments for Units IV and V are considered “end-of-course work” and should be completed and emailed to the instructor by midnight on Tuesday, September 22.

Unit V.

1. Read Fee & Stuart pp. 57-92.
2. Read Anderson pp. 74-89.
3. Watch **Video #5—New Testament Letters.**
4. Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—
 - a. What do Fee/Stuart mean by calling the NT letters “occasional documents”? Explain.
 - b. What do Fee/Stuart mean by “problem passages” in the epistles? What guidelines do they offer for handling these passages?
 - c. What do Fee/Stuart see as the tension arising from historical particularity and cultural relativity in the NT letters (pp.84ff.)? Explain.
 - d. Explain Anderson’s discussion of the Church as the “Israel of God”. Why would the Jewish community likely find this idea offensive?
 - e. Anderson sees the Bible as a great drama moving toward a goal (pp.81ff). What is that goal and what do you see as the implications of Anderson’s view?
5. Suppose you are preaching a sermon on Philippians 1:12-30. First, do some background research. What situation occasioned this letter from Paul? What is known about the writer and the recipients? Are there any literary issues here? Incorporate all of this research into a summary paragraph. THEN, develop an outline showing the main theme and supporting points of your sermon. You do not have to write a full sermon manuscript, but your outline should clearly set forth the flow of your message. Submit the research paragraph and the outline together by the deadline for this unit.

6.Participate in class discussions via Zoom with other students (Friday evening and Saturday morning of the second weekend of the class).

Please note: The work for Units IV and V is considered “end-of-course” work in that it should be completed and emailed to the instructor by midnight on Tuesday, September 22. This material will be included in the closing Zoom sessions on September 25-26.